

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LIMA 9877

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: PERU'S RETURN TO ELECTED RULE: SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DECISION BY PERU'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT THE RETURN OF ELECTED CIVILIAN RULE IN 1980 HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED BOTH HERE AND ABROAD AND IS IN LINE WITH THE IDENTIFIED U.S. INTEREST IN PERU OF A MOVEMENT TOWARD POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIBERALIZATION. HOWEVER, THE INITIATION OF THIS PROCESS, WITH ITS FIRST STEP THE ELECTION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN 1978 TO FRAME A NEW CONSTITUTION, HAS ALSO GENERATED CONSIDERABLE DEBATE LOALLY, INDICATING THAT THE ROAD TO CIVILIAN CONSTITUTIONAL RULE MAY BE ROCKIER THAN THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAD ANTICIPATED. HOW THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL GROUPS CHOOSE TO DEAL WITH THESE EMERGING ISSUES AND HOW THE MILITARY REACTS TO THE UNACCUSTOMED POLITICAL TURMOIL AND DISCUSSION WILL BE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE PROCESS. THIS MESSAGE OUTLINES ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROPOSED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND TOUCHES ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. IT IS BOTH A STATUS REPORT AND BACKGROUND FOR FUTURE POLITICAL ANALYSES OF PERU'S PORGRESS TOWARD CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND EMOCRATIC PROCATICE. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS SET JUNE 4, 1978, FOR ELECTIONS FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WHOSE "EXCLUSIVE FUNCTION" WILL BE THE DRAFTING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION. THE GOP, IN DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE ASSEMBLY, STATED THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL ESTABLISH GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS, SECURE HUMAN RIGHTS, ASSURE DEOMESTIC PLURALISM, AND INCORPORATE STRUCTURAL CHANGES ACCOMPLISHED SINCE

OCTOBER 1968 UNDER THE ARMED FORCES REVOLUTINARY GOVERNMENT. ALL PERU WILL CONSTITUTE ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT FOR PURPOSES OF ELECTIONS TO THE 1978 ASSEMBLY. ON THE BASIS OF THE CONSTITUTION THUS ESTABLISHED, POLITICAL POWER WILL RETURN TO A POPULARLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN 1980.

2. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL HAS RECEIVED FAIRLY WIDE SUPPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, A RECENT POLL BY CARETAS MAGAZINE OF "POLITICALLY AWARE" PERUVIANS, FOUND THAT 88 PERCENT APPROVE THE ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL AND 73 PERCENT FAVORED GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 1980 (INTERESTINGLY, ONLY 23 PERCENT SUPPORTED ELECTIONS BEFORE THAT DATE). PERHAPS TO THE SURPRISE OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, NOT ALL PERUVIAN POLITICAL LEADERS HAVEFULLY ENDORESED THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN. MUCH ATTENTION HAS CENTERED ON THE OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL VOICED BY THE HIGHLY RESPECTED EX-PRESIDENT AND JURIST DR. JOSE BUSTAMANTE Y RIVERO, MANY OF WHOSE VIEWS HAVE BEEN SHARED BY ELEMENTS OF BELAUNDE'S POPULAR ACTION (AP) PARTY. IN A LONG AND SCHOLARLY TREATISE CARRIED IN THE LOCAL PRESS AND SUBSEQUENTLY DEBATED WIDELY, BUSTAMANTE CONTESTED THE JURIDICAL BASIS FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ARGUING THAT SINCE THE 1933 CONSTITUTION REMAINS IN EFFECT, ANY AMENDMENTS TO IT SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT AS ESTABLISHED THEREIN. IN EFFECT, THIS WOULD MEAN SKIPPING THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND SIMPLY ELECTING A NEW LEGISLATIVE BODY WHICH WOULD ASSUME TOVERNING POWER OF THE COUNTRY. IT COULD THEN AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AS APPROPRIATE.

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3. OTHER CENTER AND RIGHIST GROUPS SUCH AS THE UNION NACIONAL ODRISTA (UNO) AND FORMER LIMA MAYOR LUIS BEDOYA REYES' POPULAR CHRISTIAN PARTY (PPC) SUPPOR THE VIEWS OF BUSTAMANTE AND AP IN VARIOUS DEGREES. EXPANDING ON THIS THESIS, THEY PARTICU LARLY OBJECT TO THE ASSEMBLY'S ASSINGED TASK OF INSTITUTIONALIZ- ING THE STRUCTUAL VHANGES PRODUCED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT SINCE 1968, SOME OF WHICH THEY VIEW AS ILL-CONCEIVED, INEFFECTIVE OR IRRELEVANT. IN THE SAME VEIN, THEY OBJECT ALSO TO THE GOP'S PROPOSAL OF A SPECIAL ROLE IN THE ASSEMBLY FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF "POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS" CREATED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. (IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT THE GOP HAS DROPPED THIS IDEA IF, INDEED, IT WAS VERY SERIOUS ABOUT IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.) DESPITE THE DEBATE ABOUT THE LEGALITY OF THE ASSEMBLY, HOWEVER, THESE PARTIES, WITH THE POSSIBLE IMPORTANT EXCEPTION OF AP, ARE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN IT. AP, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, "REJECTS" THE ASSEMBLY IDEA BUT THERE ARE INDICATING THAT THIS IS A TEMPORARY BARGAINING POSITION TO WIN BETTER ELECTORAL TERMS FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

4. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTURM, THE LEFTIST PLLITIVAL PARTIES GENERALLY ENDORSE THE ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL. THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED PERUVIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) AND OTHER SMALL

GROUPS FURTHER TO THE LEFT SUPPORT THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE VELASCO REGIME.
THESE PARTIES, SEEKING TO RETAIN THEIR LEGITIMACY ON THE
POLITICAL SCENE, WILL PRESENT THEMSELVES AS THE CHAMPIONS OF
AGRARIAN AND OTHER REFORM AND OF THE DISENFRANCHISED POOR.
TO THE CENTER LEFT, APRA OF COURSE, IS THE KEY. WHILE OPPOSING
THE "POPULAR ORGANIZATION" REPRESENTATION (AND CITING THE ONE
MAN ONE VOTE CONCEPT FOUND IN THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN
RIGHTS IN ITS SUPPORT), APRA NONETHELESS HAS ENDORSED THE IDEA
THAT "PERMANENT AND VIABLE" CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE PAST
9 YEARS MUST BE EMBODIED IN A NEW CONSTITUTION. BUT, IN FACT,
APRA HAS GONE BEYOND AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL
PLAN AND IS TRYING TO DEVELOP A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
MILITARY REGIME. FOLLOWING THE "SECRET" MEETING BETWEEN HAYA DE
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LA TORRE AND MORALES BERMUDEZ IN LATE AUGUST, (A MEETING THE MINISTER
OF INTERIOR RECENTLY SAID NEVERY TOOK PLACEL APRA HAS APPARENTLY
DECIDED TO OFFER ITS COOPERAION WITHE THE SHORT TERM GOAL OF A
DOMINANT POSITION FOR APRA AND HAYA IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
AND THE LONG TERM OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSUMPTION OF NATIONAL
POLITICAL POWER IN 1980, PERHAPS BEHIND A MORALES BERMUDEZ
CANDIDACY (A POSSIBILITY NEITHER APRA NOR THE PRESIDENT HAS

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THUS FAR RULED OUT). WHILE APRA'S STRATEGY MAY BE HELPED BY HAYA'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN CARACAS THAT HE WOULD NOT RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1980 (LIMA 7632), SOME OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT THE TRADITIONAL ENMITY BETWEEN APRA AND THE MILITARY CANNOT BE READILY OVERCOME; THEY NOTE AS AN EXAMPLE HAYA'S RECENT INJUDICIOUS COMMENT IN CARACAS, ALBEIT IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT, CONTRASTING THE APOLITICAL TRADITION OF THE CHILEAN MILITARY WITH THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE PERUVIAN ARMED FORCES.

5. THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE WHOLE PROCESS WILL BE, OF COURSE, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. HAVING APPARENTLY DROPPED THE "POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS" TACTIC AS A MEANS TO INFLUENCE THE DIRECTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE SHORT TERM AT LEAST EVIDENTLY DOES HOPE TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS AND ASSURE A DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES THROUGH APRA. IN ADDITION TO ANY UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN HAYA AND MORALES BERMUDEZ, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE ONE-ELECTORAL-DISTRICT RULE FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WOULD BENEFIT MOST THE NATIONALLY ORGANIZED APRA. AND, IT HAS BEEN APRA'S LABOR ARM, THE CTP, WHICH HAS PLAYED THE MOST MODERATE ROLE ON THE POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE LABOR SCENE. THIS STRATEGY IS NOT WITHOUT ITS RISKS TO BOTH SIDES,
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HOWEVER. APRA IS ALREADY BEING ACCUSED BY OPPONENTS SUCH AS AP OF SELLING OUT TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ABILITY OF THE PARTY TO DELIVER A SIZEABLE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE HAS NOT BEEN TESTED IN MANY YEARS. THE GOVERNMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS BEEN FORCED TO DENY THAT IT HAS ANY PACT WITH APRA OR ANYONE ELSE. ADD TO THIS THE TRADITIONAL DISTRUST BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES AND APRA AND SOME OBSERVERS CONTENT (PERHAPS WISHFULLY) THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WILL EVENTUALLY DROP APRA IN FAVOR OF SOME OTHER POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT.

6. A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS ABOUT THE POLITICAL PROCESS MAY BE EVIDENT FROM THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION RULES THAT THE GOP IS TO ISSUE LATER THIS MONTH. FOR EXAMPLE, REQUIRING A PARTY TO PRESENT AS MANY AS 100,000 SIGNATURES (INSTEAD OF THE 20,000 PREVIOUSLY NEEDED) IN ORDER TO REGISTER COULD BE DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE SOME OF THE "NEW LEFT" PARTIES THAT HAVE BEGUN TO EMERGE. ALTERNATIVELY, THIS MIGHT FORCE THEM INTO A MORE MANAGEABLE FRONT, DOMINATED PERHAPS BY THE RELATIVELY DOCILE AND PRO-GOVERNMENT PERUVIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. OTHER ISSUES TO BE FACED INCLUDE THE VOTE FOR ILLITERATES FAVORED BY APRA AND THE LEFTIST PARTIES (THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY ALREADY RULED THIS OUT AS IMPRACTICAL FOR THE 1978 ELECTIONS) AND LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FROM 21 TO 18 (THIS MAY BE APPROVED). OTHER ELECTORAL QUESTIONS WHICH WILL ARISE IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY CAMPAIGN WILL INCLUDE AMNESTY FOR EXILES AND POLITICAL PRISONERS, GREATER FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO AP, AND FREE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT
CONTROLLED TV AND RADIO.

7. IN SUM, PERU'S FIRST STEPS TOWARD A RETURN TO A DEMOCRATIC
POLITICAL PROCESS ARE MARKED AT THIS STAGE BY A SENSE OF
UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION. TO A DEGREE, THIS IS UNDERSTANDABLE.
AFTER ALMOST 10 YEARS OF MILITARY RULE AND SIGNIFICANT
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SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE, THE AGING
TRADITIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS AND THEIR PARTIES ARE
ATTEMPTING TO GET A GRIP ON THE NEW POLITICAL SCENE --
AS CARETAS POINTED OUT, NO ONE IN PERU UNDER 35 HAS EVER
VOTED IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IN ASSESSING THE
SITUATION, THEY (AND THIS EMBASSY) FACE MANY UNKNOWNNS:
THE EXTENT OF POPULAR INTEREST IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY,
THE IMPACT OF THE CONTINUING ECONOMIC CRISIS ON SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL PEACE, THE ABILITY OF MORALES
BERMUDEZ TO REMAIN IN POWER AND PURSUE THE PLAN TO
WHICH HE IS COMMITTED, THE DEGREE OF RESTRAINT AND
COMPROMISE EXERCISED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES (IN THIS,
BELAUNDE'S FINAL POSITION ON PARTICIPATION IN THE
ASSEMBLY WILL BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT), AND THE
WILLINGNESS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO ACCEPT THE RETURN
TO NONMILITARY RULE. PERHAPS BECAUSE THINGS HAVE BEEN
GOING SO BADLY FOR PERU IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THESE
UNKNOWNNS CONTRIBUTE TO A WIDE SPREAD DISCUSSION AMONG
THE POLITICALLY AWARE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A RETURN
TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, A FEELING THAT SOMEHOW
IT JUST WON'T HAPPEN. WE THINK IT PROBABLY WILL IF
MORALES BERMUDEZ CAN GET THE COUNTRY PAST ITS FINANCIAL
CRISIS AND ON TO FIRMER ECONOMIC GROUND. BUT THAT IS
A LARGE IF.
SHLAUDEMAM

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Message Attributes

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